



Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The CLIL methodological approach seeking to foster the integrated learning of languages and other areas of curricular content is a fast developing phenomenon in Europe. At the European level, interest is growing in the approach which, according to various experts, carries with it many benefits for pupils and students. EU initiatives in the field of CLIL have increased in recent years. Underlying them is the belief that young people should be more effectively prepared for the (multi)lingual and cultural requirements of a Europe in which mobility is expanding.

Aware of this challenge, national policy-makers in the field of education are taking a greater interest in CLIL and offering a wide variety of initiatives consistent with the different circumstances facing them. The present Eurydice survey has sought to review the diversity of this kind of provision in European countries. It is concerned solely with school contexts (other than language lessons) in which various subjects in the curriculum are taught using at least two languages.

A variety of names for a variety of situations

In recent years, 'Content and language Integrated Learning', with its acronym CLIL, have become the most widely used terms for this kind of provision in the world of research ⁽¹⁾. Yet nationally used terms to denote the concept vary very widely from one country to the next ⁽²⁾. Some of them tend to highlight the language dimension of learning (as in the case of 'bilingual education' or 'trilingual education'), while others also refer to its subject-based component (e.g. 'teaching of a subject in a target language'). In all cases, the definitions adopted at national level reflect often very different situations.

How CLIL is organised depends on two main factors, namely the status granted to CLIL type provision by the education authorities and the status of the target languages in the country concerned (Chapter 1).

As regards the status of CLIL type provision, three types of situation may be distinguished: provision that is part of mainstream school education (as in the majority of countries), the implementation of experimental projects or, in some countries, the absence of any initiatives in this area.

As to the target languages adopted, the overall situation is more complex. Countries offer many possible language combinations involving one or more foreign languages, regional languages or other official state languages. In general, foreign target languages are encountered as much in pilot projects (Chapter 3) as in formal mainstream education. However, regional or minority languages are only rarely the focus of pilot projects, probably because the countries in which they exist have longstanding experience in providing for them.

⁽¹⁾ CLIL - *The European Dimension: Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential*, 2002, European Commission.

⁽²⁾ For further information, see the tables in Annexe 1.

CLIL often part of school provision but not on a broad scale

The fact that a substantial majority of countries have introduced some form of CLIL provision does not mean that it is now offered to virtually all those who attend school. On the contrary, it is clear from analysis of the statistics available in the country descriptions ⁽³⁾ that the CLIL approach has not as yet been very widely adopted and that, in some countries, developments in the field occur mainly in the big cities.

In certain countries, around 3 % of pupils or students are concerned at primary and/or secondary levels, while in others the proportions stand at between 10 and 15 %. Countries in which over 20 % is reported are few in number. The highest percentages correspond, in general, to situations in which instruction is provided in regional or minority target languages. Such is often the case in countries in which the language situation is very complex and these data reflect real determination to safeguard the languages spoken by their populations.

Predominance of English

As far as conventional foreign language teaching at school is concerned, the pre-eminence of English is self-evident ⁽⁴⁾. This has also been the case of CLIL type provision, and virtually all countries in which it is available offer English as a target foreign language (Chapter 1). However, this has not prevented teaching in other foreign languages, such as French, German, Spanish or Italian.

No clear preference for any particular subjects

In CLIL provision, as much attention is paid to languages as to the subject content. In general, in primary and secondary education, all subjects in the curriculum may be targeted by CLIL (Chapter 2). However, in secondary education the range is sometimes more restricted and only a few subjects are taught in this way. Mathematics, the physical and natural sciences, geography, history, and economics are often cited in official recommendations on CLIL provision.

Furthermore, it is clear from analysing the country contributions that developing proficiency in the subjects taught using a target language may sometimes be a secondary consideration. In general, national recommendations regarding CLIL tend to attach greater importance to the language proficiency that pupils or students are meant to acquire.

The need for teacher training more focused on CLIL

The qualifications held by teachers involved in CLIL activities is a key question for most countries. In some of them, the approach is still fairly novel and inevitably calls for the development of teacher training programmes that have been specially devised for this kind of provision. It is not enough to ensure that teachers have a twofold kind of specialised training in languages and other (non-language) subjects. They should also be trained to develop in pupils or students the ability to learn subjects in a language in which their level of proficiency is not that of native speakers.

⁽³⁾ National statistical data on CLIL provision are contained in the country descriptions: <http://www.eurydice.org>.

⁽⁴⁾ See Chapter C of: Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe. 2005 Edition. Brussels: Eurydice, 2005. (*Key Data*).

In general, teachers who work in CLIL are recruited on the basis of qualifications testifying to the fact that they are specialists in one or more non-language subjects, or in certain cases, that they have both language and (non-language) subject qualifications. Other forms of certified competence are rarely required (Chapter 4).

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that education authorities develop other strategies to ensure that the professional staff recruited possess the language proficiency necessary for them to perform their tasks. Some authorities have thus turned to native speakers of the target language, while others require teachers to have undertaken initial or in-service language training; yet others insist that they should pass a test or examination in the CLIL target language.

Furthermore, a few countries are beginning to include topics related to CLIL methodology in their programmes for the continuous professional development of teachers. The training providers concerned constitute a fairly mixed group (including bodies set up for limited periods and staff involved in international cooperation) and sometimes satisfy requirements on an ad hoc basis (involvement in experimental pilot undertakings).

Evaluation far from general practice but encouraging nonetheless

The external evaluation of schools is a very widespread practice in European countries. Nevertheless, the evaluation of aspects specific to CLIL type provision occurs neither frequently nor on a regular basis, and least of all when the target languages are foreign languages (Chapter 2). However, it is true that in many countries, measuring the impact of CLIL type provision is a little premature. Yet where evaluation has been conducted both on pupil performance and the suitability of the methodologies adopted, the results have proved very encouraging.

This lends weight to the positive view that CLIL may be one possible means of furthering the declared EU aim of ensuring that most people in Europe should learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.

In this respect, the education authorities in European countries are faced in the years ahead with the task of doing everything they can to ensure that young people are more receptive to multilingualism. In spite of the barriers that remain to be overcome (and in particular the shortage of teachers, Chapter 5), the use of CLIL type provision is an approach worth developing and exploring still further.